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PRESS RELEASE

Macedonian Apparel Companies Partner with EU Buyers

During this year's Apparel Buyers Week, October 4th–8th, more than 20 Macedonian apparel companies met to discuss possible export deals with six buyers from the United Kingdom and Germany. They are interested in extending their supplier base to include Macedonian apparel producers. This second Macedonia – E.U. Apparel Buyers Week was organized by the USAID Macedonia Competitiveness Project (MCP) as well as the Dutch Center for Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries (CBI), the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the Swiss Import Promotion Program (SIPPO) and the Macedonia Textile Trade Association.

"USAID is helping Macedonia become more competitive in the global economy," said Joseph Lessard, USAID Economic Growth Director. "Through the Competitiveness Project, we support initiatives such as this Apparel Buyers Week, assisting Macedonia's apparel companies to access new and higher value export markets in the E.U."

This week's meetings are a follow-up to the Business to Business (B2B) event held last March which resulted in new product sampling and orders. One U.K. buyer that participated has already placed repeat orders while two others are involved in prototyping and sampling for potential orders. Several other U.K. buyers that have become interested in Macedonia after the B2B have also begun sampling.

"The Macedonian apparel industry needs to identify new markets and customers. This Buyers Week brings a new variety of potential buyers from the E.U. After the success of the previous B2B event in March, we expect more orders to take place" said Natasha Sivevska, Executive Director of the Textile Trade Association.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

The Competitiveness Project works closely with Macedonian companies in the apparel, light manufacturing, and information and communication technology (ICT) sectors to help them identify new buyers and meet their specific demands. The Project supports company participation in trade fairs and B2B events, improves productivity, assists in the adoption of international standards, and facilitates access to new finance. These initiatives lead to new jobs and increased value added exports, thereby building stronger and more competitive companies. The Macedonia – EU Apparel B2B is expected to become an annual event.

The American people, through USAID, have invested nearly **\$500 million** in Macedonia since 1993. USAID is implementing projects that increase investment, create jobs, reduce corruption and improve the quality of education in Macedonia. These initiatives support Macedonia's transition to a stable democracy and its successful integration into the European Union. USAID provides economic and humanitarian assistance in more than 100 countries. For more information please visit <http://macedonia.usaid.gov>.